

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of the present application is respectfully requested.

Claims 1 and 4 have been amended to clarify that the hydrogen fluoride gas feed line is connected to a hydrogen fluoride gas supply source and to an inlet in the electrolytic bath. Basis for this is believed to be clearly evident from the description, particularly that of the HF feed line 24 having the inlet 25.

According to a feature of the invention set forth in the claims, in the case of a fluorine gas generator having a hydrogen fluoride (HF) gas feed line with an automatic valve disposed therein for interrupting the HF gas feeding, the closure of the automatic valve can create a negative pressure downstream of the valve, possibly resulting in an inflow of the electrolytic bath into the HF feed line, and clogging of the feed line due to solidification of the bath (page 2, lines 23-30). The present invention therefore provides an inert gas substitution means for eliminating the hydrogen fluoride gas remaining in the HF gas feed line on a side downstream from the automatic valve, and substituting an inert gas therefor, either in the case of the interruption of the hydrogen fluoride gas feeding or in the case of an emergency. The structure disclosed in the specification as corresponding to these means includes the inert gas feed line 91, inert gas storage tank 92, and automatic valves 73 and 74 (Figure 2 and Figures 3a-3c). Therefore, in the case of the interruption of HF feeding, the automatic valve 82 and the automatic valve 73 are opened, and the automatic valve 74 is closed, whereupon the inert gas fed from the inert gas storage tank 92 at a constant pressure is fed to the HF feed line 24 on the downstream side from the automatic valve 81, and the HF gas on the downstream side from the automatic valve 81 is replaced by inert gas (page 9, lines 16-22). In the case of an emergency, the first automatic valve 81 is closed, the automatic valve 82 and automatic valve 73 are opened, and the automatic valve 74 is closed. As a result, the inert gas fed from the inert gas storage tank 92 at a constant pressure is fed from the upstream side of the

connection between the HF feed line 24 and the inert gas feed line 91 into the HF feed line 24 on the side downstream from the first automatic valve 81, and the HF gas on the side downstream of the first automatic valve 81 is replaced by inert gas (see paragraph bridging pages 9-10).

Claims 1-5 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102 as being anticipated by U.S. patent 6,818,105 (Tojo et al.), as representative of the disclosure of WO01/77412. According to the Office Action, the fluorine gas generator of Tojo et al. includes a hydrogen fluoride gas feed line having an automatic valve 53. However, this rejection is respectfully traversed.

Tojo et al. discloses a fluorine gas generator including an electrolytic bath 3. Hydrogen fluoride gas is fed via a HF feed line (unnumbered) terminating in an HF feed port 26 (column 10, lines 24-27 and 44-48). *No valve is disclosed for the HF feed line.*

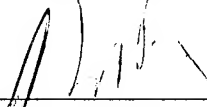
The Office Action has relied on the automatic valve 53 as corresponding to the claimed automatic valve. However, the automatic valve 53 is provided in the line leading from the inert gas purge cylinder 18 to the purge gas inlet port 17 (column 6, lines 44-46). It may therefore be appreciated that Tojo et al. fails to teach the claimed inert gas substitution means for eliminating hydrogen fluoride gas remaining in *a hydrogen fluoride gas feed line having a first automatic valve*, since the hydrogen fluoride feed line of Tojo et al. lacks a valve, and since the valve 53 which was relied on in the Office Action is instead provided on a purge gas line. The claims are therefore believed to clearly define over this prior art.

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Reply to Office Action of August 10, 2007.

Applicants believe that the present application is in a condition for allowance and respectfully solicit an early notice of allowability.

Respectfully submitted,

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